

Today we're taking the next major step in our America Reads campaign, to build our army of reading tutors on college campuses all across America. This fall, at my request, Congress created over 200,000 new work-study jobs on America's college campuses. Work-study helps young people to work their way through college, often by serving their school. I want a large portion of work-study to be devoted to community service and especially to teaching our children to read.

Today I'm happy to announce that 20 of our Nation's leading college presidents, from San Francisco to Texas to southern Illinois, are unleashing the energy and enthusiasm of their students to help every 8-year-old learn to read. As members of a new America Reads college presidents steering committee, they will each dedicate half of their new work-study slots to students who work as reading tutors. Right away this should give us thousands of new tutors, a downpayment toward our goal of enlisting 100,000 work-study students to help America read.

The steering committee members will also recruit at least five more college presidents to join the effort. To help them I am making an important change in the work-study program. If a student works as a reading tutor, colleges will no longer be required to pay one-quarter

of that student's work-study costs. With today's actions by these college presidents and with the steps we are taking to help them, college students can now work their way through school by teaching our children to read. That is how we will take more responsibility, create more opportunity, and build a stronger, more united community for all Americans.

These students will create a whole new culture of service, working alongside our AmeriCorps volunteers who will be doing the same, inspiring hundreds of thousands of Americans to tutor not just children but adult learners as well.

There is simply no better way to serve your country and your community than by helping children and adults to read. And there is no better time to start than Christmas, the season of enlightenment. By reading to your own children, by giving your time so that others might learn to read, you can light a spark that keeps the spirit of Christmas burning every day of the year.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 5:36 p.m. on December 20 in the Roosevelt Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on December 21.

Christmas Greeting to the Nation December 23, 1996

The President. Hillary and I wish all of you the peace and joy of the holiday season, a time for us to rejoice in each other's company and in the spirit of the season, a spirit of sharing and giving and making peace.

I want to send a special greeting to all the peacemakers among us, especially to our brave men and women in uniform who are away from home. You're on a mission of peace. I join with all Americans to thank you for your service and to pray for your safe return.

The First Lady. Christmas is an opportunity for all of us to give thanks for the blessings we share as families, friends, and Americans. But most important, it is a time for children, and I hope that during this holiday season we

will remember our Nation's neediest children and extend the spirit of giving to them with our love, our prayers, and our generosity.

The President. May the spirit of Christmas and the magic of the wonderful season be with you and your loved ones throughout the holidays and in the new year to come. Merry Christmas, Happy New Year, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The greeting was videotaped at 11 a.m. on December 9 in the Diplomatic Reception Room at the White House for later broadcast, and it was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 23.